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Exploration and Discovery

LAST SEASON IN EGYPT

As the new season of work in the field opens in Egypt, a glance back over the results of the past year reveals one of unusually fruitful discovery. During the last twenty-five years the immense ruins of Thebes have not yielded as much in historical and archæological monuments as many had anticipated from them. It is especially gratifying, therefore, that some of the hopes of Egyptologists have at last been fulfilled here. The Egypt Exploration Fund, besides its work at Heracleopolis under Petrie, which unfortunately furnished few results, carried on supplementary work at Thebes, on the west shore, beside the well-known terraced temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Der el-Bahri. Here Naville, assisted by Hall of the British Museum, came upon a temple of Nibkhrure-Mentuhotep, of the eleventh dynasty (2160-2000 B. C.). Its construction makes the building of the greatest interest, for it was erected at the foot of the western cliffs, and approached by an ascending ramp, which mounted a series of terraces. Its fundamental plan was therefore certainly the model for the architects of Hatshepsut in the construction of her remarkable terraced temple alongside this, its more modest prototype. Dating from an epoch of which we know so little, the building is of the greatest importance in the history of architecture. Its colonnades display the eight-sided proto-Doric columns familiar to Nile travelers at Benihasan, and its reliefs contained scenes showing the king among the grandees of his realm, receiving their homage. Some reports mention the reception of foreign tribute also. Unfortunately, the temple suffered complete ruin in antiquity, and was apparently a wreck before the end of the nineteenth dynasty (1200 B. C.). Its function was clearly mortuary, for it was designed as the sanctuary in which the mortuary ritual of the deceased king should be conducted, and the offerings for his maintenance in the hereafter should be presented. The builder, Nibkhrure-Mentuhotep became one of the patron deities of the Theban necropolis.

On the other shore of the Nile at Thebes, where the ruins of the greatest temple in the world rise among the palms of Karnak, the excavations of the government have proved a great surprise. Legrain, who has been conducting the work, has been clearing the courts on the south of the

Karnak group, which formed the southern approach from Luxor, in the days of Theban supremacy. In the northernmost of these courts—that is, the one adjoining the great hall of Karnak on the south—he has found an amazing series of monuments which are without parallel in the annals of discovery in Egypt. They number not less than one hundred and forty pieces, and consist chiefly of statues from the best periods of Egyptian art, besides some inscribed stelæ. The question as to how these things came to be buried in this court is of great interest. It is evident that they were intentionally concealed here, and the only possible motive would be that of the preservation of the monuments from sack and destruction, at the approach of some enemy. This could not have been the capture of Thebes by the Assyrians or Persians, as statues of later date are among the group. The latest monument among them dates from the close of the Ptolemaic age, as Egypt was about to become a Roman province. It was therefore one of the later revolts of the Thebans, or the approach of the barbarous Blemmyes of the eastern desert, which led the decadent priesthood of Amon to conceal their whole treasure of votive and sacred statues under the pavement of the southern court, where they have rested to this day, to enrich our treasures of Egyptian art with an accession of incalculable value. For these statues, chiefly of stone, are in an almost perfect state of preservation, and represent nearly all periods from the Old Kingdom (ended 2475 B. C.) to the close of Ptolemaic rule (30 B. C.). The earliest is a statue of Nuserre, of the fifth dynasty (2750–2625 B. C.). It is a noble work of granite from the first cataract, and measures nearly six feet in height. In the Middle Kingdom the great Sesostris (Useratesen) III, the conqueror of Nubia, is represented by a colossal head in pink granite over three feet and a half high. The trunk is still missing, but will doubtless be found before the completion of the excavations. This head is a masterpiece of Egyptian art, embodying those qualities of superhuman strength and imperturbable calm of which the Egyptian sculptor was so completely master. The flesh-forms have been so summarized in the exquisitely hard medium that something of the eternal immobility of the stone itself has been wrought into the features of the great king. From the same age are also several statues of the lords of the kingdom. A royal architect of Sesostris I, and a governor of the residence city with his wife, are wrought in granite, and their figures were erected in the temple by special favor of the king—a manner of rewarding deserving servants of the state which became more and more common from the Middle Kingdom on. Several royal statues represent the otherwise so little-known age of the thirteenth dynasty, before the invasion of the Hyksos. Numerous

works of the finest character are of the eighteenth dynasty. A magnificent torso in alabaster exhibits such perfect anatomy that one might suppose it to have been the work of the Greek age; it shows traces of gold overlay. It would consume all the available space at our disposal, and more, merely to catalogue briefly these remarkable monuments. It is especially gratifying to learn that they bear numerous inscriptions, that a number of inscribed stelæ are among them, and that the period of the twenty-sixth dynasty, from which we have so few monumental remains, is largely represented, particularly by a stela with records concerning the accession of Pharaoh Hophra (Apries), who played an inglorious rôle in the closing history of Jerusalem under the Judean kings.

The tireless exertions and the unlimited generosity of Mr. Theodore M. Davis have at last been crowned with success in reaching the sepulchral chamber in the tomb of Queen Hatshepsut, after a most arduous campaign. The tomb was unfortunately not rich in monuments, the chief of which were the two sarcophagi, belonging to the queen and her father Thutmose I, showing that the tomb was designed for them both. Mr. Davis' sumptuous publication of the tomb of Thutmose IV, also discovered during his excavations, contains a number of most important monuments in the history of art, especially the chariot of the king, with its battle scenes in relief, and the superb fragment of tapestry, the earliest known example of the art. By experts in European tapestry the piece is considered one of the finest examples of the art in existence. While this American work of Mr. Davis has been going on in the Valley of the Kings' Tombs, Schiaparelli, of Turin, has been clearing the tombs of the queens in the neighboring valley.

The German excavations at Abusir, among the pyramids of the fifth dynasty, while not productive of many new monuments, have been very fruitful in scientific results. At the pyramid of Nuserre, the same king whose statue is among the great find at Karnak, Borchardt has penetrated into the burial chamber, and carefully surveyed the whole monument, together with the pyramid-temple on its east front, and the causeway leading up from the plain of the Nile valley below. This is the first time that all these arrangements have been studied in any one pyramid. At the lower end of the causeway Borchardt found the remains of a monumental gateway of large proportions. Here the mortuary processions, connected with the feasts celebrated in the pyramid-temple, disembarked at high water, when the flats were flooded, and, passing through the great portal, marched up the causeway to the temple. It thus becomes evident that the so-called Temple of the Sphinx alongside the great Sphinx of Gizeh, at

the lower end of the causeway leading to the Second Pyramid of Gizeh, is no temple at all, as has indeed long been suspected; but is a monumental gateway forming the entrance to the causeway. In this connection it will be of interest to our readers to know that there is now a plan under consideration for the clearance of the Sphinx. By the provisions of this plan the sand would be cleared from the monument for several hundred feet in its front, entirely down to the plain before it, so that the heavy winds would thus gain an uninterrupted sweep, which, it is thought, would keep the monument from again being covered by the sands.

At Benihasan, Garstang has found a number of undisturbed burials of the twelfth dynasty, with some excellent models of boats, houses, household servants, the making of beer, slaughter of cattle, and the like. The results of Reisner at Gizeh have also been interesting and successful, though nothing beyond the usual output of the Old Kingdom mastabas has been found.

The search for Græco-Roman papyri has been prosecuted as before, and with great success. At Oxyrhyncus, Grenfell and Hunt have been rewarded for a further investigation of the rubbish heaps there by plentiful discoveries of business documents, with now and then a sprinkling of literary papyri. In their last publication of Oxyrhyncus materials (*Oxyrhyncus*, IV) they publish a very interesting fragment of the lost *Protrepticus* of Aristotle, the fascinating dialogue of his youth, from which Cicero took his *Hortensius*. When we recall that the great Augustine himself attributes his perception of the emptiness of earthly ambitions and successes to the reading of this essay of Aristotle in its Latin form, and regarded it as instrumental in bringing about his conversion, the Aristotelian dialogue acquires a new interest. Unfortunately, the fragment preserved at Oxyrhyncus is one already known from a quotation by Stobæus (*Florilegium*, III, 54). At Abusir el-Melek, near the mouth of the Fayun, the Germans have been excavating under Rubensohn. While their hopes of finding papyri have been somewhat disappointed, they had the good fortune to find the great rock galleries containing the tombs of the priests of Heracleopolis, which is near by. These burials had long ago been plundered, but the first undisturbed burial of Saitic times was found there—a discovery of importance.

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